

HOUSE RULES

Episode 23: Three Ways to Reconnect with Your Personal Style

I'm Myquillyn Smith and this is House Rules
Welcome to Episode 23

Called the Matriarch of Maximalism, interior designer, businesswoman, fashion designer, artist, collector and influencer, Iris Apfel passed away at the age of 102 in early March. For those of us who didn't really know all that much about her, we recognize her because of her eccentric style. She's the smiling centenarian with the glamorous over the top outfits, layers of costume jewelry and round oversized glasses.

If you didn't know who I was talking about at first, now you do. She referred to herself as a "geriatric starlet", an accidental icon, and it's been said that she's the originator of personal style where "more is more." When it comes to her style philosophy she says, "I like big and bold and a lot of pizzazz."

Her personal style was incredible, eccentric, ostentatious, somehow still with an approachable opulence. You just wanted to look at her. She was an innovator and an icon.

In a documentary called "Iris", she said, "In the '40s I was probably the first woman to wear jeans. All of a sudden, I had a vision. I said 'Wouldn't it be wonderful if I had... this sounds crazy, but a big gingham turban and very large hoop earrings I could wear with a nice crisp shirt and a pair of jeans.'"

She was imagining the mix. The surprising style that would result from pairing what's thought of as mens pants, with playful gingham in the form of a turban, exaggerated jewelry, a shirt everyone had in their closet.

Although this story is all about fashion and wardrobe, it has everything to do with decorating. By the end of today's episode you'll have three ways to rekindle your relationship with your

personal style when it comes to both your clothes and your decor which will lead to better, more confident styling decisions.

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A few years ago I purchased a book called “Classic Style: Hand it Down, Dress it Up, Wear it Out” by Kate Schelter. I originally purchased a copy for my niece who was going to college, but of course, I brought it home and started reading it and had to order a copy for myself.

I found myself highlighting phrases in the book not because they helped me in my personal wardrobe (they did), but more because of how they translated into a decorating style.

All of decorating is about relationships. Relationships are created across all aspects of every decision you make: color, pattern, scale, shape, and so much more. Sometimes when decorating truths get a little woo-woo, I’ll compare it to styling an outfit.

Have you ever purchased a new pair of jeans, maybe something with a fresh silhouette or cut that you don’t usually wear? That’s great. But we all know that jeans alone don’t create a style. Your personal style begins to show up the moment you pair the jeans with another piece like a top. More opportunities to create a unique style happen as you make more choices and add to your outfit. Maybe with booties, earrings, and an overcoat. The more unexpected your style, the more surprising the pairings. The safer your style, the more predictable the pairings. Having a risky or funky style isn’t right or wrong. It’s just information for you to use and apply to your own options.

This concept is the same for decor. People will often ask me how to mix styles in their home, and the very first step is to actually own individual items with an instantly obvious style. You can’t mix styles if nothing you own possesses an identifiable style. Let me be clear: if you want others to recognize that you’re mixing styles, you have to mix items with a recognizable style.

For Iris Apfel, one day that meant wearing men’s jeans, a gingham turban, gigantic hoop earrings, and a crisp shirt.

In your wardrobe, that might mean pairing bootcut jeans with stilettos, a slouchy white tee, and a worn leather moto jacket.

In your room that might mean using a modern white tulip table paired with a couple of masculine tufted vintage leather wingback chairs from the local antique mall, and a classic tuxedo-style slipcovered daybed with old wood shutters and a Mouille-style floor lamp. Now we’ve got a unique style achieved by mixing styles. Phew!

Anyone can have good taste by purchasing something that looks great on the hanger or in the catalog. But style requires you to create combinations. Combining different eras, silhouettes, textures, colors, sizes, and contrasts creates style possibilities. That means if you desire a mix

of styles in your home, you'll want to include individual items that have a strong, identifiable style and presence on their own.

Unique style requires unique combinations. Classic style requires classic combinations. Quirky style requires quirky combinations. The possibilities are endless, and you get to decide what you like.

Pieces with presence combined together create a personalized style.

But what if you feel distant from your personal style?

Kate Schelter says "Studying the pieces I gravitate toward has helped me maintain an even keel and keep my integrity in the midst of an industry built on trends."

I believe in studying the pieces that we gravitate toward. What a lovely way to get reacquainted with ourselves and our style. I think it's such a fun practice, if you are part of the Cozy Community you already have access to a mini course I taught on 12 Ways to Rediscover Your Personal Style. Today I'm sharing three.

The better you know yourself, the more you know your style.

Your style isn't lost, it doesn't need to be found. But it might be neglected, hidden or maybe it's changed over time. Three ways to remind yourself of your style, and of course since I see the world through house colored glasses, we're going to be talking about decor, but this could apply to your wardrobe as well.

1. Track Your Timeless Classics

Twenty-seven years ago I purchased a simple white Bassett dresser for \$350 from JCPenney to use in the nursery as a changing table and storage for our first born son. Since then, as we've moved to different houses, that dresser has been put to various uses. We've had it in the kitchen as storage. We've had it at the backdoor as a drop zone. It's been in our bathroom to hold towels. Back to a bedroom as an actual dresser. It's been in the foyer as a pretty landing area. In our last house it was in the family room to store DVDs. In our current house it started in my closet and has since moved into a little hallway holding a lamp and favorite photo of our boys when they were younger.

Years ago, I gave it a fresh coat of white paint, but besides needing a bit of repair on one or two of the drawers, that I'm not even sure we will ever get to, this dresser has remained unchanged. This, ladies and gentlemen, is one of my Timeless Classics.

Over the years, in all our houses built in different eras and styles, throughout all the trends of my own personal style changes, this humble white dresser has always been able to fit right into the

decor and serve us well. I keep loving it and using it and not hating it, and that's something to pay attention to.

Your timeless classic might be specific to furniture like my dresser. Or perhaps it's a silhouette that you've always loved like a wingback chair. Maybe it's a pattern you never tire of like houndstooth or stripes or toile. Maybe you loved mixing metals with your jewelry in high school and you're still mixing metals today in your home with accessories and hardware. If there's a fabric that always feels right to you — velvet or denim or linen or leather or hide — pay attention to that.

No matter what your timeless classics are, you've got to be aware of them. That way you can have extra confidence when making decisions, purchases, or changes in your home, knowing you're more likely to love and use something for the long haul if it incorporates items you have a history with. Often, these timeless classics are the foundation for a soulful, personalized home that transcends the trends.

Take a few minutes to walk around your house right now and look for your own timeless classics. What pieces have you had the longest and still love and use?

What style do you love no matter what the trends say?

What fabrics or patterns feel timeless to you, that you can always work into your home no matter what?

Discovering what you've been drawn to all along will help you hone your personal style, embrace its quirks, and make confident decorating decisions.

2. Initiate Inspiration

If you are pursuing a creative endeavor from decorating a room, painting a canvas, planning a dinner party: it's imperative that you seek inspiration as part of your job. Inspiration leads to motivation. And motivation leads to implementation. So cliff notes: if you want to get creative tasks done, simply keep yourself inspired. That makes it seem easier right?!

Have you ever gone to a huge antique mall? The individual booths are decked out to the max with over the top vignettes and beautiful styling and even if you don't buy anything you might snap some photos of inspiring ideas and when you get home you are suddenly super motivated to create a tablescape or restyle your mantel. Inspiration leads to motivation. And can help remind us of implementing things we love.

Where do you find inspiration?

When was the last time you were inspired?

Traveling, visiting the botanical gardens, going to musicals, taking walks, shopping at estate sales, walking through open houses, taking a class, reading books, going to yard sales, meeting new people. There is no wrong. How are you inspired? Seek that out and put yourself in situations where you are seeking out inspiration.

One way I've been inspired lately is watching the Lost Kitchen with Erin French on the Magnolia Network. She's a chef and although her food looks delicious, I'm not really inspired to cook when I watch her, I'm inspired to create. I'm reminded to push boundaries, to find creative solutions when things don't go the way I've planned, and to take risks. Watching other creatives create within imperfect circumstances has inspired me to find my own unique way and style.

3. The third way to uncover your style is to Discern Your Dollars.

Walk around your house. What's the best money you spent on your home?

In our previous home, we needed to upgrade the pool, which was well worth it. I added a skylight to my office, and we ended up hiring a professional to do some landscaping. These were all things that I hemmed and hawed over. I was really worried if they were going to be worth the money, did I want to spend it? And then looking back it was some of the best money that we spent on the house. And so, that gives me confidence going forward knowing what's important to me, what's important to Chad, what we want in our house. I want light, someplace to hang out in the backyard is important to us. Having pretty things and landscaping right by our door, we appreciate and value. So it's helpful to know that.

In the past few years here at my new house, I made it my mission to find interesting lighting (Episode 3 was all about lamps, I called it The Lamp Episode, if you want to listen). Other things I've bought that feel well worth the money are: neutral timeless pieces like our dining room table that we bought from the previous owners, and the marble counters that we added in the kitchen. Understanding what feels worth it helps me make more confident decisions in the future.

Maybe for you it's a vintage rug, or maybe you decided on a particular wallpaper, upgrading your duvet or paying to have a deck built. These decisions that turned out worthwhile and worth your money, help you know what's worth it in your home and how you like to use your home. And once again give you future confidence in what to move forward with in both function and style.

Let's end with a quote from the inside front cover of Classic Style. Kate says, "Forget what's cool and trust your gut. The magic is in your mix. When you draw confidence from your classics – the pieces you come back to again and again – your style is your own. Classics let you do more, and be more with less."

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Today's episode features House Rule #21: Style is found in the combinations and House Rule #23: Find your own timeless classics. Those are just two of the 100 House Rules included in the brand new book called, you guessed it, *House Rules: How to Decorate for Every Home Style and Budget*.

Oh, and how about a word about what Iris Apfel thought about rules: in her words from the documentary, "I don't have any rules because I would only be breaking them, so it's a waste of time."

That's my girl. I like to think she would have loved the House rules book because the very first rule is to learn the rules then break them beautifully. I want you to learn the rules of decorating and then break them – but I want you to break them with confidence, not because you don't know better, but because you know the room will BE better.

House Rules is available everywhere books are sold April 23, 2024, if you are listening before that date, you're extra lucky, you can preorder and reserve your copy now and as a thank you for preordering, we've created a new Masterclass House Rules in Action. I invited a video crew to my home and we walked through the rooms of my house and I shared which rules helped me make decisions in every room. You'll also receive the audio book FREE and that includes 5 extra house rules and I read them to you. There's a link in the show notes to order your copy and claim your gifts.